

problems. For example, a week before last, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) and I and some others met with a Russian physicist who had invented an engine that uses coal dust for fuel. It is more than 80 percent efficient, and that means it has almost zero pollution. These engines could allow us to make better use of our domestic coal reserves.

The energy bill conference report is over 1000 pages long, and I do not think most of us have had a chance to read it all yet, but I am excited about some of the potential it has. However, on the down side, it contains at least \$20 billion in tax credits for energy development and production. This is about twice as much as was in the House-passed bill. We are going to have to look closely at these tax breaks and look for special interest "pork" provisions that should not be in the bill.

I hope to support the bill if it is along the lines of what we passed in the House. We need to reduce our reliance on hostile and politically unstable Middle East fuel. Achieving energy self-sufficiency is going to improve our country's security for decades to come. This national energy policy shows us a way out of dependence. I hope we will give it due consideration and hopefully pass a good bill as quickly as possible.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AL QAEDA AND IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, with each passing day, the President's critics become more emboldened in their attacks on what they decry as a misleading impetus to go to war. According to the information they are able to ascertain from 24-hour news channels and the New York Times, they continue to condemn the President's claim that Saddam Hussein had links to al Qaeda.

We have all heard their diatribes accusing the President of invading Iraq with little or no evidence that Saddam Hussein worked along Osama bin Laden. I recommend the recent article in the Weekly Standard's current issue that details the memo written in response to the administration's prewar intelligence. It is clear evidence of the nexus of terrorism with terrorist-sponsoring states that many antiwar advocates deny exists at all.

According to this memo, dated October 27, 2003, bin Laden and Saddam Hussein had an operational relationship from the early 1990s to 2003 that involved training in explosives, weapons of mass destruction, logistical support for terrorist attacks, al Qaeda training camps, safe haven in Iraq, and Iraq financial support for al Qaeda.

Mr. Speaker, the findings put forth in the memo come from a variety of do-

mestic and foreign agencies including the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the CIA, and the National Security Agency. Much of the evidence is detailed, conclusive, and corroborated by multiple sources.

Some of it is new information obtained in interviews with high-level Al Qaeda terrorists and Iraqi officials and some reaches back a decade. Not surprisingly, the picture that emerges is one of long-standing collaboration between two of America's most grave enemies. According to the memo which lays out the intelligence in 50 numbered points, Iraq-al Qaeda contacts began in 1990 and continued through mid-March 2003, days before the Iraq war began. So in effect, Mr. Speaker, this information has been accumulated over three administrations.

The relationship began shortly before the first Gulf War. According to the memo, bin Laden sent emissaries to Jordan in 1990 to meet with Iraqi government officials. At some unspecified point in 1991, according to CIA analysis, Iraq sought Saddam's assistance to establish links to al Qaeda. Both parties were equally interested in developing that relationship and according to the CIA reporting memo, bin Laden wanted to expand his organization's abilities through ties in Iraq.

The cumulative weight of the intelligence is compelling. Even The Washington Post recommends that its readers examine the evidence and decide for themselves. The notion that the pragmatic Saddam Hussein, who had grown closer and closer to extreme terrorists in the 1990s, would avoid any contact with al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden is not a reasonable conclusion to draw. The alliance is a natural one. With al Qaeda now claiming responsibility for the recent attacks on synagogues in Turkey, we are reminded of our duty to respond.

Were the President to have completely ignored this information, the world would have to face potentially horrifying consequences. Yet today's critics seem eager to claim even after 9/11 the administration should only have acted against Saddam if it has proven beyond any reasonable doubt that he, Saddam, was in league with al Qaeda.

Hopefully, this report provides the evidence that is needed to make this link. This information is reaffirming our need to topple Saddam. After so many years of complacency, weakness, and denial, the President made the decision to oust Saddam. He took the action, the action that was vital to protect our country.

#### HEALTH CARE EQUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2½ minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of thousands of Ameri-

cans, millions of Americans that suffer from lack of access to health care. Our Health Care Equality and Accountability Act of 2003 would expand health care coverage by providing States the option to increase eligibility and streamline enrollment in Medicare and the CHIP program.

This piece of legislation, this landmark legislation, addresses the significant gap in health care coverage and accessibility provided to Americans. This bill is endorsed by the African American Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, as well as the Native American Caucus and the Asian Pacific Caucus and a lot of Democrats. But it is also not a Democrat or Republican; it should be a united effort in addressing the needs of our constituencies when it comes to health care.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health care we recognize the fact that there is a great gap that exists out there among our constituency. For example, in the Latino community, 19 percent of all Hispanics depend on Medicare for their health care. So it becomes important that Medicare continues to be there for us. And I am concerned that at this time we continue to look at dismantling Medicare as we know it now.

Minorities disproportionately suffer from high rates of life-threatening diseases and are less likely to have health insurance. We recognize that and that is why we need to be responsive, not just as Democrats but also as Republicans, working together to meet the needs of our constituencies that are out there.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes time for them to be fighting and defending our country in Iraq, we do not look to whether they are Hispanic or whether they are black. We work together and we ought to do the same here in making an effort to respond to their needs. As we look at the piece of legislation that we have drafted, it is a piece of legislation that looks at all the disparities. It looks at the number of uninsured and provides appropriate safeguards to protect privacy. This bill also helps in those areas.

The bill begins to look at those who are uninsured out there. And once again we have a large number of Latinos uninsured, as well as African Americans and other populations that are having a rough time getting access to health care.

Not to mention, Mr. Speaker, the fact that when it comes to prescription drug coverage, shame on us. We need to begin to look in terms of how do we meet that need. The bill that is before us this week on Medicare is a bill that begins to dismantle Medicare, two proposals, one in the Senate and one in the House, that are not worth the paper that it is written on.

So it becomes important for us to really solve the problems that confront us. I urge all Members, both Republicans and Democrats, to begin to look at addressing this issue.